

March 20, 2012

Testimony in SUPPORT of S.B. No. 425

Kelly-Ann James-Haynes

Public Health Committee

Greetings members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Kelly-Ann James-Haynes a graduate student from the University of Connecticut, School of Social Work, and a member of the National Association of Social Workers. I am writing to show my support of raised S.B. 425 which aims to provide a basic health program to cover persons under sixty-five with family incomes up to two hundred per cent of the federal poverty level.

I'm writing this testimony because of someone very close to me. My God-brother Isaiah's mother frankly is too busy working two jobs to actively participate in our democratic system. Samantha is married and now has two sons, the oldest Isaiah. She works six days a week because he husband is unable to work full time because of a head injury he suffered. They are in their late twenties and doing the best they can for their boys. I saw Samantha this weekend to spend some time with Isaiah. I noticed she was walking with a limp and I causally asked her if she would see her doctor for this. Sam said she couldn't because she was having trouble getting insurance coverage because she earned too much money to qualify for Medicaid. Then we both referenced how expensive it is to purchase coverage and she said "there's no way I could afford private insurance even with my two jobs." I stood there puzzled as what to suggest next. After all, I'm a social worker; I pride myself on being able to help vulnerable persons locate needed resources. Then I realized this wasn't a client, this was the mother of my God-brother, family. The little boy who I taught how to behave around dogs, enjoyed pizza with at Chucky Cheese, and that a bath wasn't that bad.

I looked at Isaiah thinking if his parents especially his mother became too sick to care for themselves what would happen to him. This experience reminded me of a flyer I saw at school about this State Basic Health Program. This is when I realized how vitally important this coverage would be and without it, some families, families like Samantha and her husband would remain uninsured. Limiting access or not providing health coverage to the most vulnerable in our state is simply wrong. It's like the big kid in school blocking the door to the bathroom so the smaller person can't get in. We all need to do the right thing and help our neighbors, so they can help themselves. Lack of insurance coverage has lead to many Americans going bankrupt. If you have ever been underinsured or uninsured with children you can empathize with how many in Connecticut feel. Providing services such as health coverage to the most vulnerable in our communities is an essential step we can take today to reduce the percentage of families that will create new generations living in poverty tomorrow. Do they right thing for Connecticut families and pass S.B. 425. Thank you for your time.

RAISED S.B. No. 425 AN ACT CONCERNING A BASIC HEALTH PROGRAM